

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 INT-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2642

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY SUVA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

HICOMTERPACIS SAIPAN

CINCPACREP GUAM/TTPI

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 1802

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, NH

SUBJECT: GOA VIEWS ON NEW HEBRIDES

REF: STATE 55377 (DTG: 032204Z MAR 78)

1. SUMMARY: REFTEL REQUESTED DFA VIEWS ON THE SITUATION IN THE NEW HEBRIDES. THE GOA IS CONSULTING ACTIVELY WITH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS SEEKING A METHOD TO OBTAIN AGREEMENT OF THE LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY IN THE NEW HEBRIDES, VANU' AKU, (NAMED AFTER ITS LEADER) TO PARTICI-
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PATE IN THE FORMATION OF A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, AND TO WORK TOWARD INDEPENDENCE IN 1980. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER PEACOCK DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM OF SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW HEBRIDES IN ANSWER TO AN OPPOSITION QUESTION WHICH ALLEGED THAT "THE FAILURE OF THE FRENCH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS TO CREAT A VIABLE LEGIS-

LATIVE ASSEMBLY AND TO TAKE EFFECTIVE STEPS TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNMENT HAD IMPOSED DIFFICULTIES...ON THE PEOPLE OF THE NEW HEBRIDES" AND "WAS CREATING A POTENTIAL TROUBLE SPOT IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. PEACOCK REPLIED THAT THE GOA WELCOMED THE FRENCH AND BRITISH DECISION TO ADVANCE THE NEW HEBRIDES TO INDEPENDENCE BY 1980. HE NOTED THAT THE GOA HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED THAT THE PEACEFUL TRANSITION OF THE TERRITORY TO INDEPENDENCE APPEARED THREATENED BY THE FAILURE OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED TO REACH FULL AGREEMENT. IN PARTICULAR, THE GOA WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SO-CALLED PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW HEBRIDES. WITH GOOD WILL ON BOTH SIDES, PEACOCK FELT THAT "THE PROSPECT OF DISORDER CAN BE AVOIDED AND SELF-DETERMINATION CAN BE FULFILLED." HE ESPECIALLY WELCOMED THE RECENT EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS BY THE VANU' AKU PARTY TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW ELECTIONS.

3. COMMENT: THE GOA HAS LONG PUSHED FOR A BRITISH-FRENCH DECISION TO GRANT SELF-GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW HEBRIDES BY 1980. HOWEVER, THE GOA IS CONCERNED THAT THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE WILL NOT BE PEACEFUL BECAUSE THE LARGEST POLITICAL PARTY, VANU' AKU, WITHDREW FROM ELECTIONS TO CREATE A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HELD IN NOVEMBER 1977.

4. THE DFA DESCRIBES THE VANU' AKU AS A MILDLY LEFT-WING
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PARTY STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THE TEACHING OF AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARIES. VANU' AKU MEMBERS ARE PREDOMINANTLY ENGLISH-SPEAKING, AND PROBABLY REPRESENT AROUND 55 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. PRIOR TO THE NOVEMBER 1977 ELECTIONS, VANU' AKU REFUSED A FRENCH PROPOSAL, SUPPORTED BY THE BRITISH, THAT A JOINT GOVERNMENT BE ESTABLISHED DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF THE FRENCH-SPEAKING MINORITY. BEFORE AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS, VANU' AKU INSISTED THAT THE ELECTIONS BE HELD JOINTLY WITH A VOTE ON THE INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM. VANU' AKU ALSO INSISTED THAT THE PARTY RECEIVING THE MOST VOTES WOULD RECEIVE THE MAJORITY OF THE SEATS IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND FORM GOVERNMENT. FOLLOWING BRITISH AND FRENCH DISAPPROVAL OF THESE VANU' AKU PROPOSALS, VANU' AKU BOYCOTTED THE ELECTIONS AND FORMED ITS OWN "PROVISIONAL PEOPLES GOVERNMENT" (PPG). LACKING OPPOSITION, THE FRENCH-DOMINATED MINORITY PARTY WON THE 1977 ELECTIONS AND NAMED ITS LEADER KALSAKAU, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. KALSAKAU OFFERED THREE GOVERNMENT SEATS TO VANU' AKU, WHICH WERE REFUSED. VANU' AKU THEN ARBITRARILY ESTABLISHED PRESCRIBED AREAS WHERE IT CLAIMED FULL CONTROL IN OPPOSITION TO KALSAKAU'S ELECTED ASSEMBLY.

VANU' AKU CLAIMED CONTROL OVER ALL REVENUES IN ITS AREA, ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD CONDUCT ITS OWN FOREIGN POLICY, AND DENIED ACCESS TO BRITISH AND FRENCH OFFICIALS AND POLICE.

5. THE GOA, CONCERNED BY THE UNSTABLE SITUATION FOLLOWING THE NOVEMBER 1977 ELECTIONS, HAS PRESSED BRITAIN AND FRANCE TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS. VANU' AKU LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WILL PROBABLY AGREE TO NEW ELECTIONS IF A FORMULA CAN BE WORKED OUT GIVING THEM EVENTUAL CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT.

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6. ACCORDING TO DFA SOURCES, THE BRITISH ARE MUCH MORE ANXIOUS TO GET OUT OF NEW HEBRIDES THAN ARE THE FRENCH. BEFORE AGREEING TO VANU' AKU CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT, THE FRENCH ARE SEEKING AGREEMENT THAT:

A) THE USE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE AND THE CONTINUATION OF FRENCH EDUCATION WILL BE PROTECTED IN THE NEW HEBRIDES;

B) FRENCH-OWNED LAND AND PROPERTY WILL BE PROTECTED
(THERE ARE REPOTEDLY 13 FRENCH COLONIAL FAMILIES IN THE
NEW HEBRIDES);

C) FRENCH CITIZENS WILL BE GIVEN PRIVILEGED ACCESS
FOR CONTINUING ENTRY INTO NEW HEBRIDES. IF VANU' AKU
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AGREES TO THESE CONDITIONS, FRANCE WILL PROBABLY AGREE
TO VANU' AKU'S EVENTUAL CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT.

7. DFA PLANS TO SEND AN OBSERVER TO THE NEW HEBRIDES
WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AND WILL BRIEF THE EMBASSY
ON HIS FINDINGS.
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